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Machiavellianism is personified in Metternich than in Borgia, —but the principles which lead to the triumph of righteousness do not vary in essence. It was inevitable that a mongrel and materialized Christianity, teaching a system of rewards and punishments dependent on anything but conduct and character, setting up a local and material Hell and Heaven, and in all ways turning the morals of individuals topsy-turvy, should have caused equal confusion in regard to the morals of States. It is the duty of all men who perceive that the moral laws derive their authority not from the fact that they were uttered by this or that good man in Judea, but from the fact that they are true and universally applicable; it is their duty to sweep away that old falsehood that rulers and governments are absolved from paying heed to those ethical principles to which every individual is bound. But before any State can have a conscience and obey it—and consider how long it was before any individual had a conscience—the members of the State must be moral.

WILLIAM R. THAYER.

ON THE FOUNDING OF A NEW RELIGION.

It is astonishing to see how much is written nowadays on the above subject. We say astonishing because the proposition involved is, strictly speaking, in direct contradiction to the increasing progress of science. However completely a man may have departed from religious belief, he cannot but be profoundly touched—in proportion as his heart is filled with love for humanity—by the spectacle of so many persons to whom Christianity no longer offers a consolation; but who, instead of being content with a system of pure ethics, continue to seek a new guiding star to direct their lives. Such a phenomenon is full of significance to every one who recognizes that the “greatest happiness of the greatest number” is the highest aim of civilization; and this phenomenon is the more worthy of consideration from the fact

that the great majority of the seekers after a new religion belong to the enlightened class. Not that we would declare all orthodox believers to be uneducated; for, apart from the education of the heart, after which they strive, without always attaining to it, we also find scientific culture among them; only with this difference, that they place religion above science, and dispute the latter's right to have any voice in religious matters. The firm adherence to traditional doctrines they share with the great masses, who are not in a position to acquire an education that has its root in real scientific development; but this common point of view and common aim unites the two classes into a compact whole, and warrants us in opposing them to those who desire progress above all things, and who look upon science as its fundamental condition.

We hope by these words to have removed the possibility of any misunderstanding of the following discussion. Nothing is further from our thoughts than to offend genuine believers. Their heaven-directed gaze is sacred to us, and we respect it as much as we despise the sanctimonious air of the hypocrites, whose efforts we shall always and everywhere combat to the best of our strength. We have no quarrel with the sincere believers. We cannot indeed come to a complete understanding with them, for we speak different languages. They place faith above knowledge, and their ideal is an age when the entire human race will be won over to faith. This is perfectly natural from their point of view. But the easier we can grasp this, the more incomprehensible does it seem to us that men whose starting-point is science should arrive at the same conclusion and aim at a religion intended to embrace all mankind.

For the imagination, faith has certainly great advantages over knowledge; its path is constantly widening, and the obstacles disappear in the same proportion as one accustoms one's self to set them aside, instead of seriously probing them. It is a delusion, however, to look upon everything acquired in this way as solid gain. That in all branches of knowledge profundity is synonymous with a contraction of the range of

certainty does not argue against knowledge; it is simply a consequence of the abandonment of the entire series of assumptions that have been proved unsound; and since what is lost in this way is worthless, the loss is not to be deplored. With faith, on the other hand, every deepening is at the same time an expansion; the path of mere supposition is never abandoned, and with every new assumption a whole mass of additional ones are admitted. Faith is determined by impulse and not by thoughtful experience. Its seductiveness lies in the ease with which it absorbs everything. But the consequent satisfaction disappears as soon as it endeavors to prove its assumptions. And while in the realm of knowledge, criticism leads to greater depth, in the realm of faith it has its outcome in superficiality. Consequently, knowledge as the higher of the two is, in truth, the enemy of faith, and its ideal can only be a humanity without religion,—a humanity neither allured nor threatened by promises of the world to come, but guided simply by moral law, striving with every effort for perfection.

Whether this aim can ever be reached is a useless question, because the human race may become extinct before it attains it. Fortunately this possibility is so very remote that, with the countless weighty problems engaging mankind, only he who has nothing sensible with which to occupy himself can afford to give it serious consideration. As far as science itself is concerned, this question is entirely irrelevant, because true science is an end in itself, and can only proceed by the path of experience. That its progress along this path is constant is sufficiently proved by its own history. And as this very history proves conclusively that for real knowledge there exists only critical philosophy, it follows that between the latter and positive religion there can be no union. Every attempt at such leads to another than the proposed result; either philosophy passes over into religion and is no longer critical, consequently no longer true philosophy, or religion passes over into philosophy and is no longer religion. Instead of a union there is a conflict of life and death, ending with the annihilation of the one or the other. Still, the situation is not so very serious a matter as long as one

of the two survives, which is the case in the conflict between philosophy and a revealed religion; but the founding of a new religion as "wisdom's highest end" would mean the merging of criticism into something imaginary, and nothing, strictly speaking, would be left.

The assertion that the religion which the present age is engaged in developing is not something imaginary, simply illustrates the extent to which the conception of religion has already declined. A great deal may, it is true, be implied by this term, and by viewing only its subjective phase we may come to think exclusively of the religious feeling with which we yield ourselves to an opinion, an occupation, an inclination, and speak of a religion of knowledge, of work, of friendship, etc. But is this in reality a religion? Or are we not indeed deceiving those who seek a real religion when we endeavor to satisfy them with such flowery phrases? Ever since Christianity has developed to a dominant, positive religion the notion of religion has become definite. Though many Christians may oppose various additions and demands of the Church, every true believer clings tenaciously to the fundamental principle, by virtue of which Christianity transcends mere morality and becomes a revealed religion. This fundamental principle assumes that his belief rests upon a divine revelation, insuring him a beneficent providence and guidance on earth, and adjusting the apparent injustice of this life in a better world.

And what, to judge from its general outlines, does the new religion offer in this regard? A revelation, or a tradition pointing towards a revelation, is of course out of the question, and still less may the idea of God be strongly emphasized, inasmuch as it is science which steps forward in the garb of religion. But what kind of religion is this, and what sort of science? A religion without a God is—taking the idea of religion seriously—a contradiction in itself; and a scientific religion is—provided the religious factor is to assume tangible form—a mystic science. But what is the distinguishing feature of a mysticism that masquerades as science? What but an unconscious or intentional abuse of

speculation, for speculation can only then be said to be scientific when it is employed for the purpose of bringing the data of experience into a rational order. If, however, a mere assumption by the aid of speculation is put on a level with an actual fact, or one hypothesis is supported upon another, then, although the scientific form may be retained, the true scientific character is abandoned. This process may be traced through all scientific systems of religion; and as soon as the mystic veil becomes sufficiently dense, it is no longer a matter of surprise that, with the help of a *quaternio terminorum*, Nature, in herself neither good nor bad, should be stamped as benign, and quite adapted to take the place of the dethroned God. In this way we imagine that we have saved the moral order of the universe, and that we require merely a glimpse into another world of some kind to satisfy the longing for personal immortality—the most important thing to the religiously-disposed individual. Monism constitutes the chief difficulty. It cannot be abandoned if the present course of science is to be maintained. If, however, one has thoroughly worked one's self into a state of religious enthusiasm, one grows capable of grasping the other world without encroaching on the world to come, by representing it as that which remains after the transitory features of this world have passed away. And this is all done in a strictly logical fashion, logical proofs moreover being adduced, the correctness of which cannot be gainsaid, as long as the starting-point is accepted as correct. If one ventures the observation that the whole science of criticism falls to the ground the moment the "things in themselves," proved by Kant to be illusions of the brain, are made realities, one is set aside as an agnostic; that is, as one who is content to dispense with definite knowledge. For this term we are indebted to the new science of religion, which, as a matter of fact, attempts, after the fashion of the gnostics, to know more than man can possibly know.

To obtain a clear idea of the value of a religion established in this way, let us put the question—for whom is it to be created? Certainly not for the genuine believers. They desire a real God and a real church, and if they find in these

their happiness, it would be cruel to rob them of it, inasmuch as they, like the unbelievers, have only one life to live. All that may, and at the same time *must*, be demanded of them is, that their belief shall not degenerate into fanaticism, and that they shall not interfere with those who believe differently. The new religion would, accordingly, be intended for those who are no longer content with faith, and who turn to science to find there the reconciliation between the individual and the great whole. But can a hybrid that is neither faith nor science be of any service to them? Why not rather offer them pure science in all its simplicity, but also thorough reliability? It is of the first importance for them to decide with full freedom and from pure conviction in favor of one or the other, and in order to do this they must recognize clearly that science cannot explain anything transcending the sphere of experience. It is true, one needs no small degree of renunciation in order to be content with the visible world. But whoever is not equal to this renunciation had better cling to belief,—to the true belief,—that promises him with absolute certainty a better life. While it is an undeniable fact that the churches are constantly losing ground, and the gigantic opposition which their adherents offer to a movement that is, in their eyes, a retrograde one, furnishes the strongest evidence for this fact; still it may be asked whether it is in the interest of progress to set up in the place of waning forces others that are much in the same condition? As for the notion that some sort of a religious institution is necessary to hold the masses in check, we do not even care to consider it, for this is the most objectionable abuse to which religion can be put. Such a purpose is only admitted in secret, and is certainly not present in the minds of any of the more prominent leaders of the most recent religious movement. On the other hand, there are not a few influential writers who regard the new religion as a mere transitional stage, by means of which the vacillating can be more easily won over and alienated from a real faith. But, to speak frankly, this would not be right either; because, first of all, it would imply a deception, which would not only seriously compromise the result, but as an offence against veracity would

undermine the basis of morality. Moreover, no one can tell what the new religion would lead to, in case it assumed greater dimensions. That it would be placed upon a false plane cannot be denied, and that it would result in a cult of some kind lies in the nature of things, inasmuch as what chiefly distinguishes religion from the critical conception of the world is its influence on the emotions. This fact, in connection with the formation of a community, would naturally result in a species of church with a species of priesthood, whence, sooner or later, a new priestcraft would arise,—the very last thing desired by progress. “But,” they tell us, “that is not what we want; our religion does not go beyond a simple doctrine of morality.” But this proposition is not as harmless as it appears to be. Morality and religion are two entirely different things. Through the blending with religion, morality becomes something else. Whether we speak of a “religion of morality,” or merely of an “ethical movement in religion,” what is really offered is “religious morality,” and what alone gives morality its religious coloring is mysticism. Be the admixture ever so small, still it affects the nature of the case, and by the law of necessity will tend to gain ground constantly. It was this very admixture of the mystical that gave primitive Christianity, which otherwise would have been simply a doctrine of morality, its religious type, and which has made possible its development into the present form. Its growth was due less to its propagators than to the circumstances which made it appear to man in the light of a heavenly blessing. In addition to this, it differed essentially from the heathen religions in giving expression to a conception of life which actually represented the inner life of man as something eternal. However paltry a religion created in our day seems as compared to it, it is impossible to estimate what the desire for reaction and pious cant might gradually make of it. Precisely the scientific basis—which is quite as heterogeneous to genuine belief as the latter is to genuine science—would lead it into a perfect labyrinth of distorted ideas. And whether at a time when hylozoism runs riot, and spiritualism can point to results that would do honor to the middle ages, a new religion might not

become the refuge of the crudest superstition, only he who is not aware of the devastations brought about in human thought through the confusion of ideas can fail to apprehend.

But putting aside the religious element, and leaving out of sight the founding of a new religion, let us consider a doctrine of ethics "merely" touched with religion. What would this imply? In all bluntness, we would be obliged to confess that under any conditions such a system of ethics would not be characterized by a clear consciousness of the problems and aims of humanity, nor by the recognition of the origin of man and the perfection to which he may attain, but by a mysterious "something" which affects us the more powerfully the less we are able to lift the veil that prevents an insight into its nature. Such a system of ethics would be not only a retrogression; it would be an open confession that science renounces the possibility of creating a system of ethics in accord with her principles. The essential point of human life would be beyond the confines of experience; and man would need to be educated to strive for morality as a possession that the given world does not offer, and which does not exist for science. Let us leave to the believers their other world, and let us not increase their numbers by creating half-believers, whose false humility is not even ethical, since one can only be faintly attached to what one does not wholly accept. Let us educate our children in the proud consciousness that this is a glorious world for every one who strives for her gifts, at peace with himself and his fellow-man. For this we need no religion. In fact, it is only possible without religion, because there is no morality without contentment, and it is the highest degree of discontent to strive for something beyond this world. The objection may be raised, What are we to do with those countless numbers for whom there is nothing on this earth but privation? Surely, not to solace them with a semblance of happiness, especially valuable only to those who do not need it, but to help them as far as possible, and endeavor gradually to lessen their number, is the highest aim of a true system of ethics.

B. CARNERI.